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Huhmarniemi, Maria; Jokela, Timo

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Arctic Art and Material Culture: Northern Knowledge and Cultural Resilience in Northernmost Europe

Maria Huhmarniemi & Timo Jokela

'Handmade', place-making, revitalisation and regional development are topical themes in the research of art and culture in the Arctic. The revitalisation of traditions through contemporary crafting has become a featuring approach in the Arctic, corresponding to global interest in materiality. The concept of Arctic art is used in this article to describe art, crafts, design and cultural productions that transmit the material and cultural heritage of Arctic nature and the northern knowledge system related to tactile situated knowing in northernmost Europe. Long-term art-based action research has been carried out in collaboration with the Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) network of the University of the Arctic to promote art, culture and education for Arctic sustainability. A few case studies presented in this article were art exhibitions, and the art productions that were shown in the 2019 Arctic Arts Summit (AAS) in Rovaniemi, Finland. In the present work, we discuss the knowledge studied, illustrated and debated in contemporary art productions in the AAS 2019. We conclude that the northern knowledge system is formed in situated learning in relation to local ecocultures, traditions and diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Northern knowledge can be adopted by newcomers and even guests when participating in ecocultures. Artists inform, educate and transform their global audiences by sharing and presenting northern knowledge and different ways of knowing. Research on the 'handmade', place-making, revitalisation and knowledge themes has relevance for policy making, contemporary art, arts research and art education on many levels.

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, there has been growing interest in the material culture of the Arctic. This trend is in line with new materialism, which has been described as one of the most important emerging trends in the humanities and social sciences (Gamble & Hanan, 2019). New materialism means focusing on material elements of cultures; for example, senses, bodies and tactile experience. New materialism can be seen as a cross-disciplinary effort to change assumptions about humans and the non-human material world, as well as a paradigm shift that has moved the focus from texts to makers, spaces, places and materiality (see e.g. Fox & Alldred, 2019). For people in the Arctic, this means increasing global interest in Arctic cultures and Arctic cultural heritage, such as handcrafts and arts that are strong material expressions. In contemporary art in the Arctic, crafting, the revitalisation of traditions and a focus on human–nature relations have become featuring approaches (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020).

Maria Huhmarniemi is a University Lecturer, and Timo Jokela is a Professor, of Art Education at the University of Lapland.

In this article, we refer to Arctic art when discussing contemporary art that transmits Arctic culture and heritage and aims to contribute to Arctic sustainability and policy. The concept of crafting sustainability describes art, crafts, design and cultural productions that transmit the heritage of Arctic nature and culture across generations and cultures (Härkönen et al., 2018). Arctic art and crafting sustainability are not limited to Indigenous art; instead, they also cover non-Indigenous art and co-creation by Indigenous and other artists. The dimensions of sustainability in this context focus on cultural sustainability (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

This article is derived from discourse analyses of the themes in the 2019 Arctic Arts Summit (AAS) in Rovaniemi, Finland. We studied the discourse in the AAS 2019 by analysing abstracts, conclusions, blogs and newspaper articles reflecting the presentations, art events, exhibitions and dialogues of the summit (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). Analyses showed that the discourse on sustainability is organised around five themes: (1) global politics and ecological crises, (2) relations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous art, (3) 'handmade', (4) place-making, revitalisation and regional development, and (5) economy and sustainability (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). Global politics and ecological crises impact the cultural politics of the Arctic, which became evident when some of the art performances and presentations in the AAS 2019 addressed Arctic geopolitics and the battle over natural resources and nature protection. While artists and designers tackle difficult social, cultural and environmental issues, the strength of art as a means of expression is seen as both communicating and visualising political themes as well as empowering interventions in communities, thereby leading to a transformation of values. These aims and themes are shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, and the AAS 2019 highlighted the need for collaborations to achieve cultural vitality and resilience. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures have a need to revitalise traditions and to support artists' and educational institutions' capacities to have a voice in Arctic politics. Potential is also seen in the creative economy fostered by vivid contemporary art, makers' cultures and Arctic design tackling local needs and opportunities (Jokela et al., 2020; Jokela et al., forthcoming).

The methodological choice for this study was art-based action research (ABAR). More a research strategy than a complete method, ABAR has been developed at the University of Lapland to combine artistic practices with regional development and community empowerment (Jokela, 2019; Jokela et al., 2015; Jokela et al., 2019). ABAR aims to develop the professional methods and working approaches of the artist–teacher–researcher and the artist–researcher. The strategy shares some common features with international arts-based research, artistic research and action research. In all of these research approaches, practical and theoretical research is conducted simultaneously, and research topics are situated in the middle ground of art and other fields of research, such as social sciences, studies on education and regional development. ABAR is especially rooted in process-oriented dialogical and place-specific art forms, such as environmental and community art and community-based art education.

Various aspects and examples of Arctic art have been studied in the research projects conducted by the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) network at the University of the Arctic (Jokela & Coutts, 2018b). Two exhibitions by the ASAD network have focused on the theme 'handmade' (Huhmarniemi et al., 2017; Huhmarniemi et al., 2019). In the research on crafting sustainability, cultural resilience and intergenerational dialogues, the authors of this article have studied the use of traditional handcrafting skills, methods, materials, tools, patterns and visual languages.

As part of the research cycles, exhibitions and catalogues were produced to present, study and transform the variety of handcraft-based methods and materials used in Arctic art and contemporary Sámi *duodji* [craft]. The main focus of these projects has been on promoting innovative research on contemporary art and art education. Funding of the projects was received from the Nordic Culture Fund, from their thematic call for applications that aimed to support crafting in contemporary Nordic art and design. Thus, the focus is on the northernmost parts of Nordic countries, while similar issues are also relevant elsewhere in the Arctic.

Contemporary Arctic art addresses the post-colonial situation of the region (see Horsberg Hansen, 2019; Igloliorte, 2019) and is related to attempts to achieve decolonialisation (Smith, 1999). A research professor of Arctic Indigenous studies, Rauna Kuokkanen (2000) presented the idea of an 'Indigenous paradigm', one that would be based on concerns, worldviews and cultural practices at the core of Indigenous perspectives. The essential objective would be to challenge the Western Eurocentric mindset as well as Western ways of knowing and researching (Smith, 1999). Thus, we discuss what kind of knowledge Arctic material culture carries and how this knowledge is embodied through crafting and other artistic activities. Arctic art includes a dimension of cultural politics, since it is used to highlight specificities of art and design in the Arctic and to promote cultural sustainability, diversity, ecological awareness, the revitalisation of traditions and cultural diversity (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). Issues of changing traditions, sustainability and political aspiration are essential to Arctic art. The focus of our interest is on making art that studies, represents and reforms local traditions, creates new meanings with them, and implements local knowledge in the generation of new forms of expression and innovation.

Northern knowledge systems revitalised to enhance cultural resilience

In the Arctic, the interconnection of the ecological and the cultural is intense, and this nexus can be described as 'ecocultures'. This concept highlights the specificities of coined communities and places, for example a village is its location and residents; the environment and community sharing and living in it together. A great number of local and regional traditions and beliefs are held and passed on as part of the ecoculture. Ecocultural knowledge is conceptualised in research as traditional knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, Indigenous knowledge, tacit knowledge and local knowledge (see e.g., Helander-Renvall & Markkula, 2017; Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011; Valkonen & Valkonen, 2018). The debate about the existence of specific Indigenous knowledge versus a more inclusive local knowledge is by now an old one but still unresolved. The term 'northern knowledge system' (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020) is used in this article to refer to interlinked ecological and cultural systems. It incorporates cultural heritage and the tacit knowledge of material culture in the making and wearing of arts and crafts as well as in visual symbols of arts and crafts as a language. We refer to 'northern knowledge system' rather than Arctic knowledge while this article is based on artistic work, research and living in ecocultures in the northernmost parts of Nordic countries.

Dualistic Western culture has separated art, design and crafts into distinct disciplines, while concepts represented in Arctic arts underline how art, design and crafts are both interwoven and integrated with ecoculture. The materialist turn in Western philosophy has significant consequences for social theory, since it cuts across dichotomies that were once fundamental in the humanities and social sciences. Efforts to problematise anthropocentric binaries, such as 'meaning and matter' and 'culture and nature', have been made (Gamble & Hanan, 2019). The focus on

materiality challenges differentiations between 'natural and social worlds', 'human and non-human', and 'animate and inanimate' (Fox & Alldred, 2019). Sámi researchers Jarno Valkonen and Sanna Valkonen (2018) added the categorical distinctions 'traditional and modern', 'local and supralocal' and 'knowledge and beliefs' and noted that these distinctions are present in Indigenous research because Indigenous people are generally considered to be representative of traditional, strictly local communities which are intrinsically tied to the land and to nature. They also pointed out that a focus on traditionality, locality and land relations carry political meanings and overtones. Regardless, in research on Sámi *duodji* [craft] many of the dichotomies are transcended, when *duodji* is discussed in between art, craft, design, tradition and modernity (see Guttorm, 2015). At the same time, Indigenous contemporary artists and designers are transforming traditions with the help of modern technologies and are showing their work in international art exhibitions and design expositions.

Sámi artist and scholar Elina Helander-Renvall (2016) has described how local knowledge grows in between the dichotomies when people conceptualise their experiences to better understand the world in which they live. With the concept of the northern knowledge system, we highlight that knowledge is not always conceptualised verbally (orally or in written form) but is also conveyed in visual signs, symbols, patterns, colour codes and choice of material. This visually crafted language has communicative significance both inside and outside of the communities. The language of crafts is important to the continuation of cultures and even to the sharing of worldviews (see e.g. Joy, 2019; Kramvig & Flemmen, 2019; Minnakhmetova et al., 2019; Schilar & Keskitalo, 2018). The material culture of the Arctic carries spiritual and religious dimensions and represents relations to nature (Helander-Renval, 2009; Joy, 2018). Because of the importance of material culture for members of Indigenous cultures, intense and often emotional discussions are provoked whenever cultural appropriation and exploitation take place through the misuse of symbols, crafts and other elements of material culture. A need to adjust and articulate the ethical principles underlying design activities with regard to traditional heritage and existing, locally established ways and rules of visual communication has been noted (Minnakhmetova et al., 2019).

Climate change impacts ecosystems and local ecocultures. As Kathrin Stephen (2018), a senior fellow at The Arctic Institute, described altered harvesting, hunting and fishing patterns have affected cultures, identifications and the value and usability of traditional knowledge. Residents of the Arctic face a challenging situation, when the base of their cultural identity is shaken. Resilience is demanded to face rapid environmental changes and following cultural shifts. The concept of resilience refers to the capacity of an individual, community and natural entities to cope with changes, adapt to them and even transform them into new possibilities. Resilience thinking has attained prominence in a number of research disciplines as well as in policy making for sustainable development. In this article, we use the concept of ecocultural resilience to follow professor of rural development Seema Arora-Jonsson (2016), who argued that we need to 'situate' rather than 'integrate' our knowledge production and demand recognition of the value of place-based knowledge and different ways of knowing. By the concept of northern knowledge system, we also refer to the situated knowing with nature, as it is discussed in new materialistic and post-humanistic research paradigms (Rantala et al., 2019). The idea of situated knowledge as part of ecocultures also challenges art education. What kinds of traditions should we aim to pass on to new generations through art education, and what should artists learn in art universities in the Arctic?

Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures affect each other in the Nordic countries, and are bound to nature in the same locations, to the extent that it may be difficult to determine the degree to which local Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge of nature differ from each other. As Jules Pretty (2011), a professor of environment and society, explained, ecocultures need to regain their connections with the environment to improve their own resilience (Pretty, 2011). Pretty underscored the need for ways to connect knowledge with action to produce optimal outcomes for both nature and culture, especially in times of change, and suggested that ecocultural systems can be redesigned by emphasising the incorporation of local and traditional knowledge (Pretty, 2011). We are interested in pondering how Arctic art can possess the agency to hold and revitalise Indigenous, local and situated knowledge as well as to foster cultural resilience.

Revitalisation is described as a practice that renews and remakes cultural traditions (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015). Revitalisation is often understood as the creation of cultural continuation from one generation to the next, as the reconstruction of forgotten skills, and as the promotion of cultural identities rooted in villages, towns and wider regions. New meaning can be given to elements of traditions (such as crafts) in contemporary art (Guttorm, 2015; Horsberg Hansen, 2016; Härkönen et al., 2018; Igloliorte, 2019; Jokela, 2008a; Stöckell, 2018), community-based art education (Gårdvik et al., 2014; Hiltunen, 2008, 2010; Hiltunen & Zemtsova, 2014) and art-based tourism services, such as crafting workshops (Huhmarniemi et al., 2020).

Contemporary and participatory crafting is one way to cultivate revitalisation. The concept of crafted sustainability is used to describe the (verbal and non-verbal) dialogue formed through making handcrafts and the method of contemporary art as a shared cultural heritage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Härkönen et al., 2018). This approach is not limited to the Arctic: crafting is applied to intergenerational and intercultural dialogue with people worldwide and offers possibilities to integrate newcomers and guests into local cultures. Many people, especially from rural regions, may have experiences or memories of crafting, and these shared experiences are valuable when enhancing dialogue and a sense of belonging to community and place (Härkönen et al., 2018). Researchers have shown how art and art-based activities empower local communities (Hiltunen, 2008, 2010), as well as how strong cultural identity and a vivid local culture can help people and even entire communities in the Arctic to be more resilient to any type of change (Cunsolo et al., 2017). Material cultures based on northern knowledge form an important element of the ecoculture and create a strong part for local identity. In this article, we discuss how different ways of knowing and elements of knowledge are presented in art to enhance place-bound cultural identity and thus also cultural resilience.

Art-based action research and collaboration with members of the ASAD network

The objectives of ABAR are to identify and distinguish problems at the local level and to create solutions through artistic work that often involve various means of collaboration with community members, artists and researcher peers. For example, some objectives address community empowerment, social change, increased environmental responsibility and sense of community. Revitalisation through artistic interventions that enhance the vitality of traditional skills and focus on northern knowledge have been developed in the ABAR conducted in Lapland (Hiltunen, 2009; Härkönen et al., 2018; Jokela, 2018; Stöckell, 2018).

Since 2012, when the ASAD network was established (as part of the UArctic organisation), Arctic educational institutions in fields of art and design have collaborated to foster cultural life in the Arctic and to strengthen vitality and regional development through art and culture (Jokela & Coutts, 2018b). ABAR and place-based art implemented in the ASAD collaborations have been promoted as a way to integrate artistic work, education, research and regional development. Building on existing ecocultures in Arctic towns and villages and on the skills and strengths of locals, as well as on contemporary art and international collaboration, this approach represents a viable alternative to conventional top-down and nationally coordinated development projects. Members of the ASAD network have set the development aims and shared their results in joint exhibitions and publications that have a particular, annual thematic focus (see Jokela & Coutts, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2019) (Table 1).

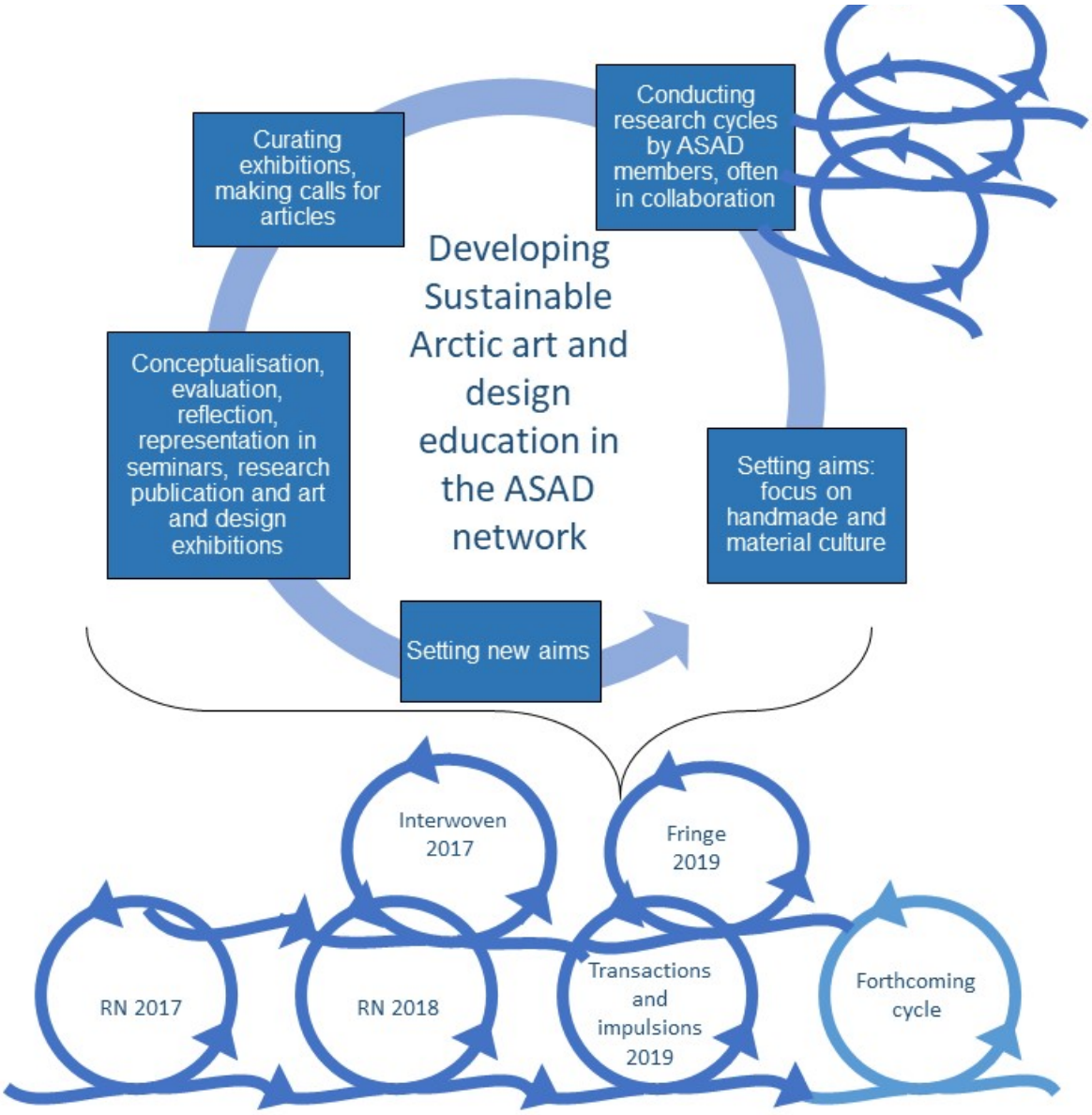

Table 1: The development of sustainable Arctic art and design education. The research cycles, such as the *Shared Woollen Patterns* project, is part of this development, as illustrated in the top-right corner of the table.

Studies with respect to the 'handmade' theme were presented in the 2017 *Interwoven* exhibition, which was curated by Ásthildur Jónsdóttir and shown in the Nordic House in Reykjavik, in addition to art galleries in Rovaniemi and in the exhibition catalogue (Huhmarniemi et al., 2017). The analyses of the art practice shown in the *Interwoven* were described with the 'crafting sustainability' concept (Härkönen et al., 2018). The second cycle of the joint study on the 'handmade' theme was aimed at creating multi-level dialogues through crafted contemporary art and was presented as part of the AAS 2019 as the *Fringe* exhibition and catalogue, co-curated by Maria Huhmarniemi, Ásthildur Jónsdóttir and Ekaterina Sharova (2019). In addition, the material culture of the Arctic has been studied in many other joint exhibitions by the ASAD network, as well as in the *Transactions and Impulsions* exhibition shown in the AAS 2019, curated by professors Mirja Hiltunen and Timo Haanpää (Hiltunen, 2019).

The development of Arctic art and sustainable art education in the Arctic is a joint effort by ASAD members that follows the principles of ABAR as a way to set aims, conduct artistic and art-based interventions, and analyse and present results in research publications and exhibitions, such as the *Relate North* series of publications and exhibitions. As part of the international collaboration, the authors of this article have been conducting a number of research cycles on the use of traditional handcraft methods and materials in Arctic art (see Härkönen et al., 2018). The authors have learned traditional crafts from their parents and used these skills in their art installations and socially engaged art project in villages in Lapland and elsewhere in the Arctic. Some of the artistic work has been dialogical and community-oriented, while other work has constituted individual artistic productions as part of joint exhibitions aimed at highlighting Arctic art and northern knowledge systems as embedded in arts and crafts.

A case study of the ABAR approach usually starts with a place and a community mapping, in which the researcher-artist becomes familiar with the place and associated community. The process of ABAR is structured according to the cyclical progress of mapping, setting aims, planning, practical artistic action, reflection, evaluation and theorising (Jokela, 2019). Various research methods can be implemented to supplement the analytical process of the research, and documentation of the artistic process and results is commonly utilised. In contrast to many other artistic research approaches, the focus of ABAR is not on the development of one's personal artistic expression but instead on interactions among co-artists, co-researchers and participants – in this case, especially among ASAD network members and Arctic peoples.

Fringe highlighting the handmade theme – Transactions and impulsions analysing Arctic ecocultures

The title of the exhibition, *Fringe*, refers to the outer edge, the margin. The curators, Huhmarniemi, Jónsdóttir and Sharova (2019), have stated that when something is regarded as peripheral, marginal or extreme, it often must be respected and protected. The curators intended to make connections through arts and crafts and to show works by artists who have studied the dialogical themes and methods from various perspectives with handmade techniques. The theme of 'handmade dialogue' included intercultural dialogue as well as dialogue with nature, other generations and traditions. The curators stated that they were aiming to increase appreciation and understanding of the diverse use of handicrafts in reflecting the North and in fostering resilience among exhibition visitors (Huhmarniemi, et al., 2019).

The *Fringe* exhibition presented a number of works by artists from Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and the United States. In this article, we have chosen to present three of them. First was the work titled *My Way to Ieš̆vuođat & Ieš̆dovddut II* by Sámi artist Gunvor Guttorm (Photo series 1). In the exhibition catalogue (Huhmarniemi et al., 2019: 14), Guttorm described the following:

> My background is in *duodji* (Sámi craft), and I use *duodji* as a basis for my ideas. For many people, *duodji* is one aspect of a person's whole life. *Duodji* has its origins in everyday Sámi life. In my work, I have been interested in exploring how our mothers and grandmothers created an existence in which they were able to exist in the centre of life while at the same time being able to find the peace and quiet to create things, often to cover a necessity. I have chosen knitting as a technique in my own work. I have combined knitting with pre-fabricated elements, such as bottles that I have been given or that I have found or purchased at jumble sales. These bottles are pre-defined, but I have wanted to give them a new identity, a transition from being a bottle to being something else.

Photo series 1: Gunvor Guttorm, *My Way to Ieš̆vuođat & Ieš̆dovddut II,* 2014. Carafes with knitted covers and reindeer horn lids. Photo on left by Gunvor Guttorm; photo on right by Janne Jakola.

The second artwork from the *Fringe* exhibition presented here is the installation *Shared Woollen Patterns* by Elina Härkönen, Maria Huhmarniemi, Miia Mäkinen and Jari Rinne. The installation consists of knitted pieces that artists have asked to receive from many places in the Arctic (photo 1 and photos 2). In other words, the installation is based on the participatory art project of inviting crafters to represent their cultural identity and heritage through colours and patterns in the knitted pieces. The installation includes fragments of soundscape with actual knitting sounds and the told stories, explaining knitters relation to patterns. The artists stated that the installation aims to make handcraft traditions visible and to demonstrate their dimension as a shared tradition of knitting that brings people together. Alluring audio cues open the listener to hearing the 'knitting state of mind': slowing down, having cosy feelings, and experiencing a safe space for sharing (Huhmarniemi et al., 2019: 26).

Photo 1: Elina Härkönen, Maria Huhmarniemi, Miia Mäkinen and Jari Rinne. *Shared Woollen Patterns*, 2019. Photo by Kaisa-Reetta Seppänen.

Photo 2: Elina Härkönen, Maria Huhmarniemi, Miia Mäkinen and Jari Rinne. *Shared Woollen Patterns,* 2019. Documentation of the process. Photo by Miia Mäkinen.

The third artwork from the *Fringe* exhibition presented here was made by Alison Aune, a painter and professor of art education at the University of Duluth, in the US state of Minnesota. Aune can trace her ancestry to northern parts of Nordic countries, and her paintings thus incorporate decorative-symbolic motifs found in Swedish, Norwegian and Sámi textiles (photo series 2). Through an inquiry of these patterns, Aune discovered some symbolic meanings as well as the cultural significance of the designs:

> I am not only exploring my cultural roots, but I am keeping the imagery alive by re-contextualising these ancient forms into a new artistic form that explores the intersection of women's material culture, craft and heritage (Huhmarniemi et al., 2019: 8).

Photo series 2: Alison Aune, *Sky*, 2016, acrylic and paper on canvas, 91 cm x 121 cm. Photo on left by Alison Aune; photo on right by Kaisa-Reetta Seppänen.

The *Transactions and Impulsions* exhibition presented art mostly from contexts of art-based research and art-based educational research by selected ASAD members. A wide range of artistic media were implemented: the exhibition covered installations, media art, photographs, video art, textile art and posters. The curators Hiltunen and Haanpää stated that the artworks reflect the ecocultural shift following climate change and other Arctic megatrends as well as the roles of artists, designers and art educators in supporting people in the Arctic:

> Some of the artists use traditional materials, techniques and colours and ancient symbols in a contemporary context. The artworks raise questions about and offer fresh perspectives on crucial Arctic issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, advocacy for consideration of land-based knowledge and environmental responsibility. At the same time, the exhibition shows how artists, designers and art educators can become co-authors of local makers by commenting on and redefining the living culture and the visual appearance of the North (Hiltunen & Haanpää, 2019: 4).

The installation by Timo Jokela was shown in the *Transactions and Impulsions* exhibition. The artwork presents an experience of a seashore and a change in the material culture of the Arctic (photo series 3). Jokela presented the background of his work in the following way:

> In the 80s and 90s, I used to walk on the shorelines of the Varangerfjord villages in northern Norway. In those days, the local fishing industry was experiencing a rapid change. Fishermen said that 'See sea is black, empty of fish'. The boat sheds were abandoned, and hard winds had scattered the old-style fishing gear around the seashore. I picked up cork fishing net

> floats one by one – each of them like a story of a changed life at sea. I used them as notebooks and marked down my landscape observations, the lights and colours of the sea and the sky, and the shadows of the abandoned stock fish-drying contraptions. About 20 years later, when I returned to Varangerfjord, the old boat sheds were gone, and the cork floats on the shore had become broken, colourful plastic pieces and messy ropes (Hiltunen, 2019: 17).

Photo series 3: Timo Jokela, *30 Years' Walk at Varangerfjord*, 2018, installation: found objects, cork and plastic (600 × 60 × 30 cm). Photo on the top by Kaisa-Reetta Seppänen, photos below by Timo Jokela

Discussion

Crafting and traditional skills were strongly present at the exhibitions and talks in the AAS 2019. Features of tradition and elements of ecoculture analysed and presented in the artworks were expressed through handmade art. The ways in which Arctic art was related to contemporary new materialism were noticed and emphasised by cultural policy researcher Maria Hirvi-Ijäs in her reflection on the artistic programme and presentations of AAS 2019:

> What is now theorised as new materialism is perceived here as a basis. Art is not separated from craft, the cultural heritage is reflected from the perspective of practice. The inclusive research field brings together contemporary art, all types of design, crafts, technology and media. The concept of art history may give way to the anthropological and political (Hirvi-Ijäs, 2019) (Translated from Swedish by the authors).

Artworks presented in this article evoke at least three different levels of material and cultural heritage and ways of knowing: (1) traditional worldviews and stories (which can be understood as indigenous knowledge embedded in crafts and represented in contemporary art); (2) situated knowing as part of an ecoculture that is in constant change; (3) political positions of Indigenous

and non-Indigenous people as well as statements that either underline how traditions are bound to place or identify the ways in which they can be shared to unite people from various locations or from one generation to another.

Aune described the background of her painting by explaining that she is connected to the history of her relatives and to bringing their traditions into a new context of contemporary society. The material culture of the Arctic was seen as a kind of cultural knowledge pool from which new generations can extract Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge without actually living in the land where that knowledge is based. Instead of situated knowing, the blood relations to ancient knowledge holders was underlined to ensure that members of newer generations are entitled to carry the knowledge and implement it for their own needs. Aune described the background of her painting in relation to her relatives in the following way:

> In my painting, *Sky*, I have painted my nephew in a Sámi Gákti surrounded by repeating textile patterns of the Norwegian eight-petaled rose (or star), symbolic of good luck and protection, to honour our Arctic Norwegian-Sámi ancestry. Sky wears the Gákti to honour my father's grandmother, Margarethe, who was a midwife, healer and Sámi; and his grandfather, Bernt, who was the 7th son of the 7th son and a healer who immigrated to Hazel Run, Minnesota, a Norwegian settlement, at the turn of the century (Huhmarniemi et al., 2019: 8).

While the *Sky* painting by Aune evoked how traditional imagery is kept alive by re-contextualising traditional patterns in an artistic form, the *Shared Woollen Patterns* installation drew attention to intentional sharing and to common ground between local and regional identity symbols. This was achieved by demonstrating similarities of knitted patterns. Although some of the models and colours of these knitted patterns are typical of a specific region, many of the patterns are common to many regions. The installation makes a political statement by showing that cultures are connected. The installation does not differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous patterns. Instead, it combines patterns into a joint collage in the symbolic form of a cloak in order to symbolise the living traditions and express cultural identity as a type of protection. The soundscape of the installation recalls memories of knitting and also shared experiences across cultures.

Risks associated with cultural appropriation can be seen in an approach like that taken for *Shared Woollen Patterns* if such patterns carry cultural knowledge that can disappear or change when the patterns are adopted to new regions and communities. Similar issues have been mapped in ornamental objects in modern design and architecture in northern Russia. Design researchers Ramilya Minnakhmetova, Svetlana Usenyuk-Kravchuk and Yulia Konkova (2019) analysed these objects and raised a number of concerns related to intercultural encounters between 'outsider' designers and local/Indigenous systems of communication and identity. They revealed that ornamental borrowings often follow formalistic attributes but result in the loss of the ornament's sacral semantic aspect, which can be seen as a tacit violation of cultural norms and values.

Valkonen and Valkonen (2018) explained that if traditional Indigenous knowledge is understood as a kind of cultural heritage that is passed on from one generation to another, then this means that the knowing subject and knowledge are separated from each other and that essential, knowledge-specific, localised dynamism does not exist. To sharpen their argument, Valkonen and Valkonen (2018: 16) explained: 'Local knowledge is not a capsule nor is a knowing subject a time

traveller who draws immemorial knowledge from the knowledge pool for his or her needs'. Nonetheless, in the AAS 2019, the material culture of the Arctic as a form of knowledge storage and inspiration for contemporary expression was appreciated and celebrated. A similar trend can be seen in Sámi art in general. For example, Sámi artist Outi Pieski in Finland made contemporary art by studying ancient forms of headgear.

What is discussed as a northern knowledge system differs from Indigenous knowledge because situated knowledge, integrated with the ecoculture and living traditions, is formed and carried by non-Indigenous residents in the Nordic countries as well. In addition, it is shared in situated learning in a place-specific manner. Northern knowledge as part of place-specific art has been described in earlier research (Jokela, 2008; 2013).

Changing ecosystems in the Arctic is impacting local ecocultures and identities (Stephen, 2018), as presented in Jokela's work, *30 Years' Walk at Varangerfjord*, which visualised rapid changes in ecoculture based on fishing. This work reflects situated knowing as part of an ecoculture that is undergoing constant change. Ways to deal with loss and changes in ecosystems are considered necessary for the continuation of culture and associated human capacities in the Arctic. Professor of archaeology Cornelius Holtorf (2018) has studied how cultural resilience is increased through cultural heritage. He explained that people must learn to accept loss and the transformation of heritage to enhance post-disaster recovery. According to Holtorf, the evident changes in heritage over time can inspire people to accept uncertainty and distress in times of change, which can in turn increase their cultural resilience. Panu Pihkala (2018), an ecotheologist who has familiarised in eco-anxiety, explained that space for processing grief, loss and threats must be allowed, while hope and action should continue to be emphasised. Pihkala values the strength of art as relief from eco-anxiety via deep, existential and spiritual art-based experiences that touch both body and mind (Pihkala, 2017). Several researchers have also provided evidence for the impact of a strong cultural identity on resilience (Cunsolo et al., 2017; Wexler & Burke, 2011; Wilkie, 2020). Their studies have concentrated on youth and university students who 'walk in two worlds' as they face sociocultural differences between Western and Indigenous cultures.

Sharova (2019) reflected on the *Fringe* exhibition by referring to the embodied knowledge that the artworks represent and by stating that these artworks evoke the themes of identity, connectedness and intersections in a number of ways:

> What seems very important here is namely the method, the holistic approach where relations between a human and nature are central, where culture and nature can co-exist, where various flowers can grow. The artists in the exhibitions represent not only themselves as individuals, but also the culture of the place, several generations or a family which revolves around the Arctic. The stories of the place are reflected in a form (Sharova, 2019).

All of the artworks presented in this article transform traditions in their own way. They enhance cultural continuation by fostering the presence of tradition in contemporary culture. We argue that Arctic art strengthens regional cultural identities and thus also cultural resilience. Rapid environmental changes in the Arctic demand cultural resilience built on empowerment, cultural pride and strong regional identity. Cultural resilience supports both individuals and communities in facing, mitigating and even overcoming such rapid changes by conferring on them the capacity to transform traditions.

Both exhibitions presented here showed Arctic Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists side by side, reflecting the political sense of the Arctic art concept: using art to foster bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Arctic peoples. Curatorial choices underscored the importance of such art-based bridges, whereas national strategies in Arctic countries mainly deal with cultures in the context of regional Indigenous populations (Lempinen, 2019). The revitalisation of various local cultures and traditions, the encouragement of cultural identities and the celebration of cultural diversity are all needed to enhance cultural resilience. Revitalisation can be both intergenerational and intercultural, aiming to transmit northern knowledge, artistry and cultural practices to new generations and to new community members *in situ*. Contemporary craft can be considered as a method of expression that reflects, reforms and presents northern knowledge (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). The artworks in the exhibitions expressed political statements that underlined how indigenous knowledge can be adopted in other locations, how northern knowledge is bound to place, and the ways in which traditions can be shared to unite people in various locations.

To what extent is northern knowledge expressed in tactical crafting skills compatible with artistic thinking and knowing as discussed in arts-based research methods (Leavy, 2009; 2017)? Artistic thinking refers to the knowing that is visible in artistic productions, often in forms other than verbal. This function is similar to northern knowledge as defined in this article. On the other hand, artistic research and artistic thinking often refer to the universal essence of art as, for example, a modernistic aesthetic that is not place-bound. In this sense, situated northern knowledge is very different from artistic knowing. Alternatively, the presence of a northern knowledge system can be compared to 'knowing with nature' (Haraway, 2008: 4).

The debate over the ways in which Arctic artists participate in political conversations was an essential result of the AAS 2019 that made the political nature of Arctic art more understandable. The AAS 2019 empowered artists and other participants in their efforts to impact society and participate in (global and local) environmental and cultural politics (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). To further support artists' capacities to involve themselves in Arctic politics, it is important that education and networking events for artists are organised in regions where northern knowledge exists and conflicts are actualised. In addition, as a conclusion drawn from the AAS 2019, we propose that to achieve and maintain Arctic sustainability, the importance of the 'handmade', revitalisation and northern knowledge conceptions should be emphasised in art education and among artists training in the Arctic.

Conclusion

Material cultures based on northern knowledge form an important element of the ecoculture and create a strong base for local identity. In this article, we discussed how different ways of knowing, and elements of traditions, are presented in contemporary art to enhance place-bound cultural identity and thus also cultural resilience. The northern knowledge system is formed in situated learning in relation to local ecocultures, traditions and diverse cultures in northern parts of Nordic countries Northern knowledge can be adopted by participating in ecocultures, and thus northern knowledge can be shared with newcomers and even guests. In addition, Arctic artists inform and educate their global audiences, share traditions and pass on the material culture of the Arctic to new generations, even those outside the northern region. Cultural resilience is enhanced by cultural empowerment, cultural pride and strong regional identity. This resilience supports individuals and

communities in facing rapid changes in the Arctic by helping them to transform their traditions into a contemporary culture and in response to contemporary needs. Studies on the 'handmade', place-making and revitalisation themes have relevance for policy making, and for artistic practice and research on the Arctic. Ultimately, this study informs art education and artistic training in the Arctic. Our conclusion is that themes of 'handmade', revitalisation and situated northern knowledge are critically important for art education and artistic training in the Arctic. Anyhow cultural sensitivity is needed to avoid cultural appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous cultures.

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